

Providing Housing, Food and Medical Support for 25,000 Katrina Evacuees with 12 Hours Notice: The Harris County Medical Support of the Superdome Evacuees

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Introduction: Hurricane Katrina was responsible for trapping 25,000 people in the New Orleans Superdome and isolating many others throughout Louisiana and Mississippi. The transport of these evacuees to the Reliant Park (Houston, Texas) used 500 buses each containing about 55 people. Processing the arriving evacuees included addressing their health status and medical needs as follows: an initial triage at disembarkation, a secondary triage in the Reliant Astrodome and Center, and definitive clinical care in the Reliant Arena "Katrina" Clinic.

Methods: Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) physicians boarded buses and identified the sickest for emergency transport to Harris County Hospital District (HCHD) hospitals. BCM departments represented included pediatrics, family and community medicine, internal medicine, radiology, obstetrics and gynecology, orthopedics, surgery, and psychiatry. Astrodome and Center triage was managed by BCM physicians and staffed by HCHD Nurses and volunteers from Texas and beyond.

Results: The Reliant Astrodome, Center and Arena reached peak headcounts of 15,000, 4500, and 2500, respectively. Most evacuees visiting the triage sites in the Astrodome and Center were treated using "over-the-counter" medications with the remaining being transported to the "Katrina" clinic. The clinic was

equipped with a lab, pharmacy, digital X-ray, and ultrasound machines in addition to electronic patient records created using 80 computer terminals. The Katrina clinic saw more than 15,000 patients during 15 days of operations (2,000 on the first full day), administered 10,000 tetanus shots, and filled thousands of prescriptions. At the peak of operations, the clinic saw 150 patients/hour with 25 physicians scheduled for each 12-hour shift. Approximately 900 people were transported to hospital emergency rooms.

Discussion: Within 3 weeks of arriving at the Reliant Park facilities, more than 90% of the families found permanent housing, enrolled children in schools, and found work.

Using data obtained from manual and electronic medical records, this presentation will document the major milestones and lessons learned from this extraordinary project to help the Katrina evacuees.

Learning objectives:

- 1) To understand the resources needed to respond to the evacuation of 25,000 displaced persons to a large city with an intact medical system.
- 2) To understand the importance of gathering any kind of data during these emergency events for the purposes refining future emergency plans.
- 3) To understand the differences in planning for possibly permanently displaced populations versus local emergency disaster plans